

Item Title: Digital Inclusion Project Update

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners receives information on the county's efforts around the digital inclusion project.

Item Summary:

The Wake County Board of Commissioners sought to bring attention to digital inclusion and created Economic Strength Initiative 2.1, which directs the County to “work with partners to enhance high-speed internet connectivity options for all residents. Explore methods to reduce barriers, leverage resources, and facilitate the buildout of high-speed internet that enables coverage, speed, and affordability for all residents and improves digital literacy/fluency and equity.” This initiative carries forward into the *Wake County Strategic Plan* and is connected to Inclusive Prosperity Goal 1: By 2029, 5% more residents asked will indicate low barriers to employment, such as access to broadband, childcare, and transportation.

Building off the vision set forth in the North Carolina Digital Equity Plan (2024), we are working toward a future where all Wake County residents have access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet and the digital tools, resources, and skills to participate in our society, democracy, and economy fully and equitably. Wake County has selected a Vendor, Michael Baker, International, and local partner, BWL Consultant, to coordinate and engage a collective voice of residents most affected by the digital divide, along with local business representatives, organizational leaders, municipalities, and individuals committed to eliminating digital inequities. The digital inclusion plan will focus on developing a strategy to assure all Wake County residents have access to digital fluency training, high speed internet, and devices.

This report-out will give a status update regarding the project. Currently Wake has facilitated three stakeholder roundtables. Interviews with the Internet Service Provider are happening later in June and Wake County is hosting five community conversations between July 16–18, 2024.

Attachments:

1. Presentation